

Wisconsin Ethics Commission

Lobbyists and principals

The 3 R's Of Lobbying In Wisconsin

This is an overview of what individuals and organizations need to do to lobby in the State of Wisconsin. For additional information consult the publications cited.

I. REGISTRATION AND LICENSING

Registration of Organization Engaged in Lobbying Activities and Authorization of Lobbyists

- Wisconsin Statutes require that an organization that compensates an individual to attempt to influence legislation or agency rules register as a lobbying principal before the fifth day on which the individual communicates with state officials on behalf of the organization. (For more information, see Wisconsin Ethics Commission Guideline ETH-1513) In addition, the organization must authorize each individual who is lobbying on the organization's behalf and the individual must obtain a lobby license. The registration and authorization form is usually filed at the same time as the lobby license application; that is, before an individual starts to communicate with state officials on behalf of an organization.
- The registration and authorization are effective upon the Ethics Commission's receipt of the registration and authorization form and fee.
- Registration and authorization expire December 31, every even-numbered year.
- **\$375 fee** for the lobbying organization **to register** as a principal.
- **\$125 fee per lobbyist authorized.**

Lobby License and Authorization

- Wisconsin Statutes require that an individual obtain a lobby license and authorization before the fifth day on which he or she communicates with state officials to attempt to influence legislation or an agency rule on behalf of an organization that pays the individual to do so. (For more information, see Wisconsin Ethics Commission Guideline ETH-1511.) The Ethics Commission recommends that an individual who anticipates lobbying on more than four days in a six-month period obtain a lobby license and be authorized by a registered lobbying principal *before* engaging in lobbying activities.
- The lobby license and authorization to lobby are effective upon the Wisconsin Ethics Commission's receipt of the license application, authorization form, and fees.
- The lobby license expires December 31, every even-numbered year.
- Currently, there is a **\$250 license fee** to represent one organization and a **\$400 license fee** to represent multiple organizations per legislative session.

II. RESTRAINTS

- **No lobbyist or lobbying organization may furnish anything of pecuniary value** to an elective state official or candidate, agency official, or legislative employee, except that a campaign contribution may be made to an official or candidate during the period between the first day to circulate nomination papers and the day of the general or special election. Restrictions also apply whenever the legislature is in session. (For more information, see Wisconsin Ethics Commission Guidelines ETH-1201, ETH-1211, and ETH-1250.)
- No lobbyist may instigate legislative or administrative action for the purpose of obtaining employment in support or opposition thereto.
- No lobbyist may contract to receive compensation dependent in any manner upon the success or failure of any legislative or administrative action.

III. REPORTING

Reporting bills, rules, and topics

- Each lobbying organization must report to the Wisconsin Ethics Commission each bill or proposed rule and each topic on which the organization makes a lobbying communication. Lobbying on the budget bill must be reported by subject. The principal, through an authorized individual, must report the bill, budget subject, proposed rule, or topic to the Ethics Commission within 15 days of the first lobbying communication.
- A lobbying organization may report each bill, budget subject, proposed rule, or topic to the Ethics Commission via the electronic reporting tool on the Commission's web site.
- To learn who is lobbying on a bill or rule, or to learn what bills, rules, and other topics a particular organization is interested in, visit the Commission's website throughout the course of the legislative session. Our web address is -- <http://lobbying.wi.gov>.

Principal's Statement of Lobbying Activities and Expenditures

- Each lobbying organization maintains a daily itemization of the time its employees spend in lobbying-related activities.
- A lobbying organization files a Principal's Statement of Lobbying Activities and Expenditures with the Wisconsin Ethics Commission twice a year. The filing deadline is July 31 for the January through June reporting period. The filing deadline is January 31 for the July through December reporting period.
- Lobbying organizations may submit their statement using the Ethics Commission's on-line reporting system or may request a paper version.

Lobbyist's Portion of Principal's Statement of Lobbying Activities -- daily itemization of lobbying time

- Each licensed lobbyist authorized by the organization maintains a daily itemization of the time the lobbyist spends lobbying and engaging in activities related to lobbying.
- The lobbyist completes a time report supplied by the Ethics Commission and submits it either on line or in paper to the organization prior to the January 31 or July 31 reporting deadline.